reserve base, Government have taken steps in 1989-90 to augment regional drilling efforts of Geological Survey of India (GSI). As a result of these efforts 204.65 billion tonnes of coal and 27.39 billion tonnes of lignite reserves have been currently established.

(b) Following steps have been taken to ensure efficient utilisation of coal by the power and steel units:—

i) Two washeries each for coking coal and non-coking coal benification are in advance stage of construction by Coal India Limited (CIL).

ii) Washeries are being set up by the private parties working as agent of the power stations or for direct sale to power stations.

iii) Washeries are being set up by the coal companies through private investment under Build-Own-Operate scheme.

iv) Generating companies ensure complete combustion of coal by providing adequate combustion air, proper drought in the boiler system, coal guns for flame stabilisation and maintain adequate residence time for complete combustion and reduction of unburnt carbon loss.

v) Coal Dust Injection, Stamp Charging and adoption of corex method & steel making by the steel sector.

ESI Reserve funds with RBI

*319. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether ESI reserve funds are locked-up in special deposit account with Reserve Bank of India;

(b) if so, the total amount in the acount as on date;

(c) whether Government have conceded not to release the principal amount invested to ESI Corporation for high yielding investment elsewhere; and

(d) if so, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) to (d) An amount of Rs. 2395.40 crore belonging to the ESI Corporation has been invested in the Special Deposit Account with the Reserve Bank of India. From 1992-93 the ESI Corporation has got an option to keep their fresh accretions to surplus funds in deposit with the banks. The interest on deposit held with the Government has also been made payable to the Corporation with effect from 1993-94. In January, 1997 the ESI Corporation has been permitted to withdraw past accumulations in the Special Deposit Account at the rate of Rs. 200.00 crore per annum from the year 1998-99, so as to facilitate investment of the same as per the rules.

Privatising mining of Coal

*320. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: SHRI ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently decided to privatise the mining of coal;

(b) if so, the justification therefor;

(c) whether Government have also decided to deregulate its pricing; and

(d) if so, justification therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) The Government have, subject to legislative changes, decided to offer new coal blocks, without the restriction on coal mining for captive consumption only, to the Indian Companies both in the Public and Private Sectors, on the basis of competitive bidding. The successful bidder will be free to sell coal in open market at any price negotiated between him and the consumer.

(b) The baisc objectives of the above mentioned decision of the Government are:

(i) to cover the ever increasing gap between demand and supply of coal;

(ii) to augment investments in coal mining which are presently dependent on Government investment alone; and

(iii) to improve overall efficiency of the coal industry through competition.

(c) In February 1996, the Government decided to deregulate the prices of coking coal and A,B and C grades of non-coking coal. In February 1997, the Government have taken a decision to deregulate the prices of D grade of non-coking coal, hard coke and soft coke.

(d) The Government budgetary support to the nationalised coal companies has been reduced considerably. In such a situation, the objectives of the Government decision to deregulate the prices of coke and above mentioned grades of non-coking coal are:—

(i) to enable the nationalised coal companies to absorb the cost of production with the coal prices;

(ii) to improve the financial health of the nationalised coal companies and to enable them to generate adequate internal resources needed for investment in modernisation and expansion in their coal mines.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Vigilance Offices to Check Misuse of PDS Foodgrains

2254. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have stipulated that vigilance offices be set up at Taluk level in all States to check misuse of PDSs foodgrains;

(b) if so, details of this proposal;

(c) whether State Governments agreed to this plan;

(d) whether any public awareness programme will be launched to curb the misuse of PDS; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) State Governments/UT Administrations have been asked to constitute Vigilance Committees at various levels including Fair Price Shops, Taluk, District and State levels. At Fair Price Shop level, the Committee can include a few card holders attached to the Shop, (some of whom should be women), elected President of Panchayat or Municipal Councilor, consumer activists and other social workers of repute. Taluk level Committees with Taluk Supply Officer as convenor and District level Committees with District Supply Officer as convenor can also be formed.

(c) All State Governments/UT Administrations have welcomed the idea of setting up of these Vigilance Committees at various levels as it will facilitate transparency in Public Distribution System.; and

(d) and (e) State Governments/UT Administrations have been instructed that Panchayat Presidents and members of Municipalities and other local bodies should be informed of the allocations and actual offtake of essential commodities for the Fair Price Shops within their territory. District Collectors can also use local Press to inform the public about the total monthly allocations of various essential commodities in the Districts and the actual issue during the previous months to the card holders.